

Subject: Notice of Proposed Rule to Designate Critical Habitat for the Southern Resident Killer Whale - DOI Comments

From: "Allison O'Brien" <reapn@mindspring.com>

Date: Fri, 11 Aug 2006 10:19:37 -0700

To: orcahabitat.nwr@noaa.gov

CC: "repapn" <repapn@mindspring.com>, "Kelly_Powell" <Kelly_Powell@partner.nps.gov>

Attached, please find the Department of the Interior's comments on the subject Notice of Proposed Rule.

Thank you,
Allison O'Brien

Allison O'Brien
Regional Environmental Assistant
United States Department of the Interior
500 NE Multnomah St., Ste. 356
Portland, Oregon 97232
Phone: (503) 231-6157
Fax: (503) 231-2361

ER06_605_NOPR.pdf	Content-Description: ER06_605_NOPR.pdf Content-Type: application/pdf Content-Encoding: base64
--------------------------	--



United States Department of the Interior



OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Office of Environmental Policy and Compliance
500 NE Multnomah Street, Suite 356
Portland, Oregon 97232-2036

9043.1

IN REPLY REFER TO:

ER06/605

August 11, 2006

Ms. Donna Darm
Chief
Protected Resources Division
1201 NE Lloyd Blvd., Suite 1100
Portland, Oregon 97232-1274

Dear Ms. Darm:

The Department of the Interior (Department) has reviewed the Notice of Proposed Rule to Designate Habitat for the Southern Resident Killer Whale which was published in the Federal Register on June 15, 2006. The Department offers the following comments on the Proposed Rule.

The National Marine Fisheries Service proposes to designate critical habitat for the Southern Resident killer whale (*Orcinus orca*) (orca) distinct population segment which was recently listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Act. Three specific areas are proposed for designation: the Summer Core Area in Haro Strait and waters around the San Juan Islands; Puget Sound; and the Strait of Juan de Fuca. In total, these areas comprise approximately 2,564 square miles (6,641 sq km) of marine habitat.

The National Park Service (NPS) manages two units of the national park system in the vicinity of the proposed critical habitat area: the San Juan Island National Historical Park (NHP), portions of which are adjacent to the Haro Strait, and the Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve (NHR), which is located on Whidbey Island. Under the Organic Act, the NPS is required to preserve unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the national park system for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this generation and future generations. In addition, part of NPS's core mission is to educate the public on important aspects of natural, cultural, and environmental life systems. The marine environment, of which orcas are an integral part, is very important to the entire ecosystem of the Pacific Northwest region. The orca whale is a prominent and recurring theme in the interpretive programs for the San Juan Island NHP and Ebey's Landing NHR, as well for other parks in the region. Protection for the orca populations in these areas will not only benefit these populations, but will also benefit park visitors. Whale-watching is one of the most popular activities in the area, and visitors to the park units, as well as local residents, particularly enjoy watching the orcas as they feed in and travel through the various waterways

proposed for designation. Based on the information provided in the Notice of Proposed Rule, the designation of critical habitat would be complementary to park programs and management practices.

The Department appreciates the opportunity to comment on the proposed rule. If there are any questions or concerns about these comments please contact Ms. Kelly Powell, Environmental Compliance Reviewer, National Park Service, Pacific West Region at (206) 220-4106, kelly_powell@nps.gov.

Sincerely,



Preston A. Sleeper
Regional Environmental Officer